

# **PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT (INCLUDING LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL)**

## **PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**LAND SOUTH OF SYMONDS YAT VIEW,  
GREAT DOWARD AVENUE, WHITCHURCH,  
HR9 6FP**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Job Ref</b>
<b>Russell Pryce MRTPI</b>	<b>January 2024</b>	<b>5490</b>

**E:russell@collinsdb.co.uk**

**T:07931 808200**

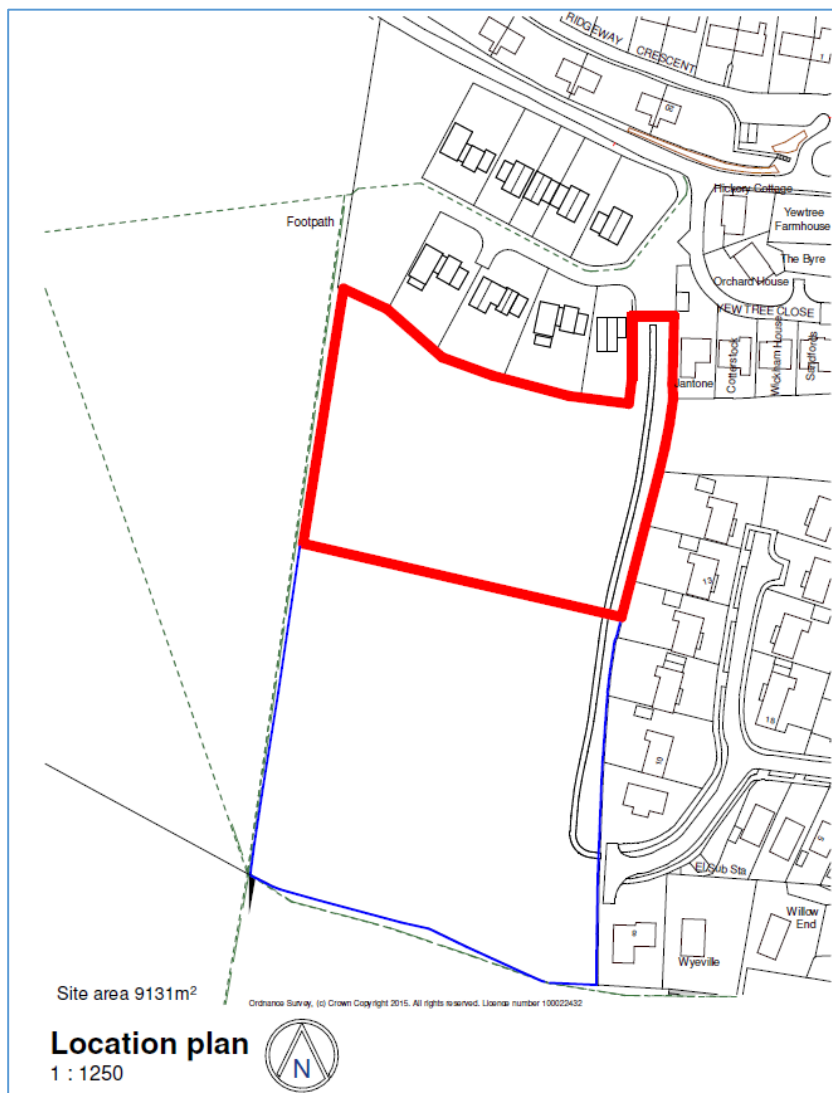


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# 1 Site location and Description

1.1 The site lies on the western edge of Whitchurch adjoining the existing built up area of the settlement. Whitchurch straddles the A40 trunk road, approximately 6 miles south west of Ross on Wye and 4 miles north east of Monmouth. The site is outlined in red on the location plan below.



1.2 Immediately north is a development of nine detached and semi detached dwellings completed last year (1-9 Symonds Yat View), north east is Yew Tree Close and east is Grange park - an estate of predominantly detached bungalows constructed in the 1970's.

1.3 The site extends to 0.9 hectare and forms part of a larger rectangular agricultural field. The northern boundary adjoins the rear gardens of Symonds Yat View and is defined with a mixture of post and rail fencing and hedging and the western

boundary is defined with post and wire fence and occasional native hedging and ornamental trees.

- 1.4 Access is gained off the C1252 (Llangrove Road) and is shared with Symonds Yat View and Yew Tree Close. The access and estate road is currently in the maintenance period of the adoption process.
- 1.5 Levels within the site and wider field rise from the eastern to western boundaries by approximately ten metres whilst the north/south contours are relatively flat.
- 1.6 Public footpath number WC101 runs through Symonds Yat View and follows the western site boundary (but outside the application site) and continues south of the application site and east into the village. A new footpath also provides access from the site into Grange Park and village facilities.
- 1.7 The site and adjoining land including Whitchurch itself fall within the Wye Valley National Landscape.

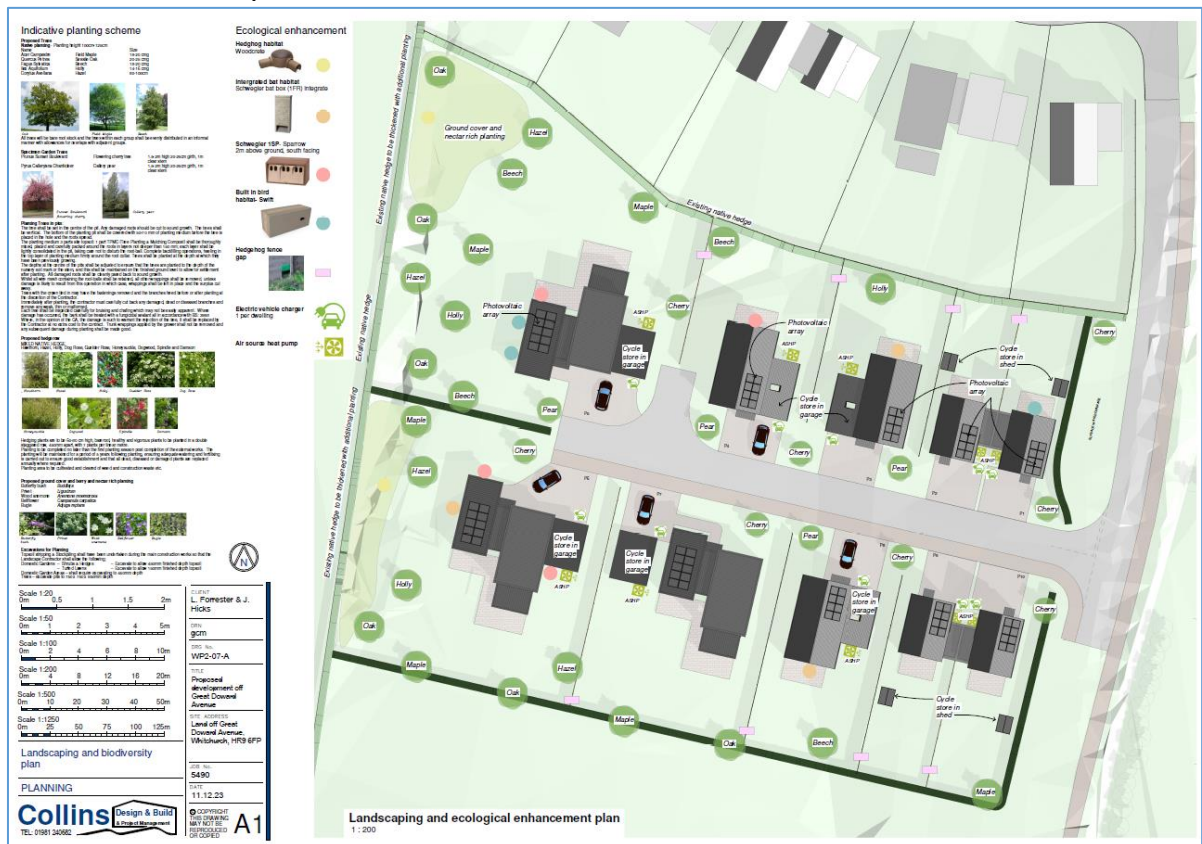
## 2. The Proposal

- 2.1 Detailed planning permission is sought for the following:  
*Residential development of ten sustainable dwellings with associated road and drainage infrastructure, hedgerow and tree planting.*
- 2.2 This scheme comprises of 4 x 2 bed semi detached, 3 x 3 bed detached and 3 x 4 bed detached dwellings. The proposal utilises the existing access serving neighbouring estates and the estate road will be extended south to serve the development. This will then turn west serving the dwellings.



- 2.3 The layout broadly mirrors the Symonds Yat View development with an estate road running west up the slope and houses either side fronting the road. All properties benefit from ample on plot parking and most also have larger garages and each dwelling has commensurate area of garden.
- 2.4 A contemporary design approach to the houses has been adopted similar to Symonds Yat View. Dwellings are a mixture of pitched roof and mono pitched roofs with a complementary arrangement of fenestration and palette of materials comprising dark brick, composite timber cladding and render to the elevations and a mixture of slate and standing seam metal sheet roofs.

2.5 The development is set within a strong landscape framework comprising of native hedges and trees and ground cover shrubs to integrate the development into the landscape.



2.6 Surface water will be managed sustainably within the site and foul drainage will connect to the public sewer within the estate road.

2.7 The application is also supported by an ecology survey and drainage strategy.

### 3. Planning Policy – Housing Need and The Principle

#### The Development Plan

- 3.1 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004, this proposal must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 In Herefordshire, the Development Plan consists of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy (CS) which was adopted in October 2015 and runs from the period 2011 to 2031. The plan is now time expired as it is more than five years since adoption. In November 2020, a decision was taken to prepare a new plan but this is likely to be approximately two years to achieve adoption and so the current Core Strategy remains the relevant development plan for decision making purposes.
- 3.3 **CS Policy SS2 - Delivering New Homes**, confirms that in the rural areas, new housing development will be acceptable *“where it helps to meet housing needs and requirements, supports the rural economy and local services and facilities and is responsive to the needs of its community.”*
- 3.4 Also part of the development plan is the Whitchurch and Ganarew Group Neighbourhood Development Plan, which was made (adopted) on 11<sup>nd</sup> October 2019.
- 3.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) is also a material planning consideration and introduced a national policy framework that requires a positive and proactive approach to the consideration of development that is sustainable. This is facilitated through applying a policy test of a presumption in favour of sustainable development into decision making.

#### Housing Need

- 3.6 The Council annual housing land supply position statement for the period 2023-2028<sup>1</sup> confirms that they presently can demonstrate a five year supply of housing land with the supply standing at 5.84 years. However, the surplus has been achieved through a change in the methodology to calculating the supply

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<sup>1</sup> Five year housing land supply (2023-2028) annual position statement at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – August 2023

rather than a significant increase in deliverable permissions. Nevertheless, for decision making, this means that the adopted development plan policies can be attributed full weight.

3.7 Core Strategy Policy - RA1 Rural Housing Distribution splits Herefordshire's rural areas into seven Housing Market Areas (HMA's). This policy apportions the required 5,300 new homes across the seven rural HMA's based on their different characteristics, housing needs and requirements.

3.8 This site falls within Ross on Wye HMA where 1150 new dwellings are required over the plan period, which equates to an indicative 14% growth target for each identified settlement with this HMA.

3.9 Paragraph 4.8.21 of the CS also explains that this percentage is the minimum figure that the NDP should seek to establish in order to deliver the required housing growth for that Parish, the Housing Market Area and County.

*'The proportional growth target within policy RA1 will provide the basis for the minimum level of new housing that will be accommodated in each Neighbourhood Development Plan. The target represents a level of growth for parishes, as a percentage, that is proportionate to existing HMA characteristics'.*

3.10 Paragraph 70 of the NPPF also states:

*'Small and medium size sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:*

*Criteria A – identify land to accommodate at least 10% on their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare.*

3.11 The value of a smaller site such as this in meeting the housing needs should therefore be given material weight in the planning balance.

3.12 Also relevant is the ongoing moratorium on development north of the county as result of phosphate impact on the River Lugg catchment. This is having a significant impact on the delivery of housing in the county and therefore in order to boost housing supply, delivery on other suitable sites becomes a stronger material planning consideration.



## **The Principle and Planning Policy**

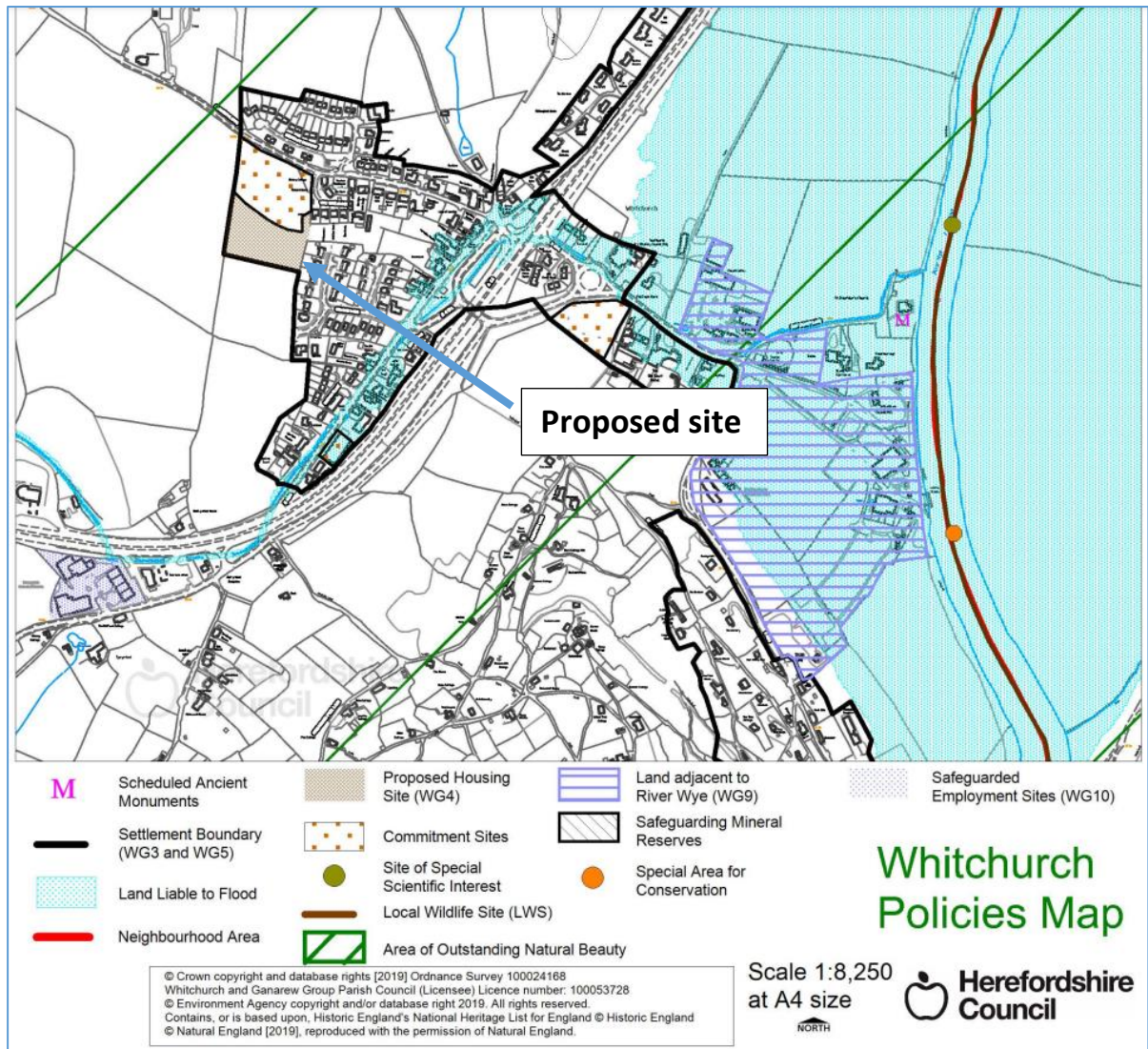
- 3.13 CS Policy RA2 – ‘Housing in Settlements outside Hereford and the market towns’ identifies the rural settlements where housing growth can take place and Whitchurch is named as an upper tier sustainable settlement in Figure 4.14 of this policy where a greater proportion of rural housing should be focussed.
- 3.14 CS policy RA2 states that in order:  
*‘To maintain and strengthen locally sustainable communities across the rural parts of Herefordshire, sustainable housing growth will be supported in or adjacent to those settlements identified in Figures 4.14 and 4.15. This will enable development that has the ability to bolster existing service provision, improve facilities and infrastructure and meet the needs of the communities concerned’.*
- 3.15 The 2021 census identifies that Whitchurch is a settlement of 591 households and population of around 1400. The village is the second largest and one of the most sustainable settlements in the Ross on Wye Housing Market Area in terms of accessibility, services and amenities.
- 3.16 ‘Woods of Whitchurch’ provides a village store and post office facilities and the Dafynant and Murco service stations either side of the A40 provide fuel, Spar shopping and café facilities. In addition there is a garage and MOT testing station in the village and a diner and car wash facility on the northbound side of the A40. The village also has a public house and hotel, church and other tourist attractions.
- 3.17 Whitchurch Primary School provides pre-school and primary school education and has an “Outstanding” rating by Ofsted (2012). The Whitchurch Memorial Hall provides a venue for community activities.
- 3.18 The village is also well served by bus services south to Monmouth and north to Ross on Wye and Hereford and bus stops are conveniently located in the heart of the village on both sides of the A40.
- 3.19 Local industrial and commercial businesses are located at 3 industrial estates throughout the parish and there is a steel fabrication company at the north end of the parish, adjacent to a VW garage and a motor caravan centre. The business activity is vibrant throughout the parish. In total, there are more than 150 businesses within the Parish.

- 3.20 Whitchurch therefore has an important role and function as a vibrant settlement in its own right that also serves the wider needs of the locality. Additional housing will assist in supporting the sustainability of existing facilities, services and amenities and the future vitality of the village and Parish.
- 3.21 CS Policy RA2 then sets out the criteria to be satisfied for development within and adjoining the identified settlements referenced in Figure 4.14. The principal criteria being:
- a) The design and layout reflect the size, role and function of each settlement, be located within or adjacent to the main built up area,
  - b) Maximise the use of brownfield land wherever possible,
  - c) Achieve high quality, sustainable developments which are appropriate to their context, and contribute positively to the environment and landscape setting,
  - d) Deliver the appropriate housing type and mix to meet local demand
- 3.22 The policy is positively worded and states that housing proposals will be permitted where:
- 1) *'Their design and layout reflects the size, role and function of each settlement and be located within or adjacent to the main built up area....'*
- 3.23 The site adjoins existing housing and will form a logical extension of the settlement. The site therefore meets the gateway policy test in terms of being adjacent the main built up area of the village.
- 3.24 The NDP also defines a settlement boundary for Whitchurch, which is included on the following page. The site lies entirely within this settlement boundary. NDP Policy WG3: Housing development in Whitchurch explains as follows:
- New housing within Whitchurch will primarily be restricted to sensitive infilling within a settlement boundary, sites already committed through planning permissions and on the site identified for development shown on Whitchurch Village Policies Map.*
- 3.25 Moreover, the site is allocated for housing within the NDP under Policy WG4: Housing Site in Whitchurch:
- Land amounting to approximately 1.0 hectare adjacent to Yew Tree Close shown on Whitchurch Village Policies Map is allocated for housing development where it complies with policies set out in this plan.*

3.26 NDP paragraph 6.2.4 explains:

*This site is expected to provide some 10 additional dwellings which reflects the density of dwellings on adjacent sites.*

3.27 The principle of the site being developed for ten dwellings is therefore supported by the Core Strategy and NDP.



3.28 The second part of criteria 1 of policy RA2 requires 'The design and layout reflects the size, role and function of each settlement'

3.29 The scale of this development is proportionate with the scale of the settlement and the balanced housing mix will assist in meeting this CS policy objective thereby supporting the role and function of the settlement.

3.30 The design of the development is considered in detail in Section 4. However, the design and layout has been informed by the characteristics of the site, location, existing pattern of development and landscape setting. This is a relatively low density development that responds to the edge of settlement location of the site.

*Criteria 2) The location makes best and full use of suitable brownfield sites wherever possible.*

3.31 This is not applicable as the site is allocated in the NDP for ten dwellings. In any event, the policy does not preclude the development of greenfield land and there is no requirement to provide evidence that brownfield sites have first been considered.

*Criteria 3) They result in the development of high quality, sustainable schemes which are appropriate to their context and make a positive contribution to the surrounding environment and its landscape setting;*

3.32 Achieving a sustainable scheme that is locally distinctive has been at the heart of the design process. The layout and density respects the character of development in the area. The designs are distinctive and varied but incorporate a consistent contemporary design theme that will integrate with the built context to the north.

3.33 The dwellings are orientated north/south enabling the benefits of passive solar gain to be maximised whilst the simple forms will enable a super insulated sub-structure supported by low carbon heating system thus assisting with minimising energy demands for future occupiers and the associated carbon footprint of the development. The sustainability of the development is considered further in Section 4.

3.34 A high quality sustainable scheme is proposed that is appropriate to the site and its landscape and built context.

*Criteria 4) They result in the delivery of schemes that generate the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular settlements, reflecting local demand.*

- 3.35 The latest Housing Market Area Needs Assessment<sup>2</sup> identifies that within the Ross on Wye Housing Market Area, there is a need for 2, 3 and 4 bed properties. To maintain an acceptable density of development and having regard to the fact a greater proportion of the Symonds Yat View was three and four beds, 40% of this development is to be two bed units. This strikes a balance between local housing need and the evidence in the HMNA.
- 3.36 The proposal therefore meets the local need in terms of dwelling type and size.
- 3.37 For these reasons, the development accords with Core Strategy policies RA1, RA2 and SD1 and NDP policies WG3 and WG4.

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<sup>2</sup> Housing Market Area Needs Assessment – July 2021

## 4. Design

- 4.1 CS policies **SD1 - Sustainable design and energy efficiency** and **LD1 – Landscape and Townscape** along with **NDP policies WG7 – Housing Design and Appearance, WG8 – Sustainable Design and WG14 – Conserving the landscape and scenic beauty, both within and outside the AONB** require that the design of new developments be successfully integrated with the built and natural context by being informed by and positively contributing to the appearance of the locality and character of the landscape. These policy objectives have been at the heart of this design process.

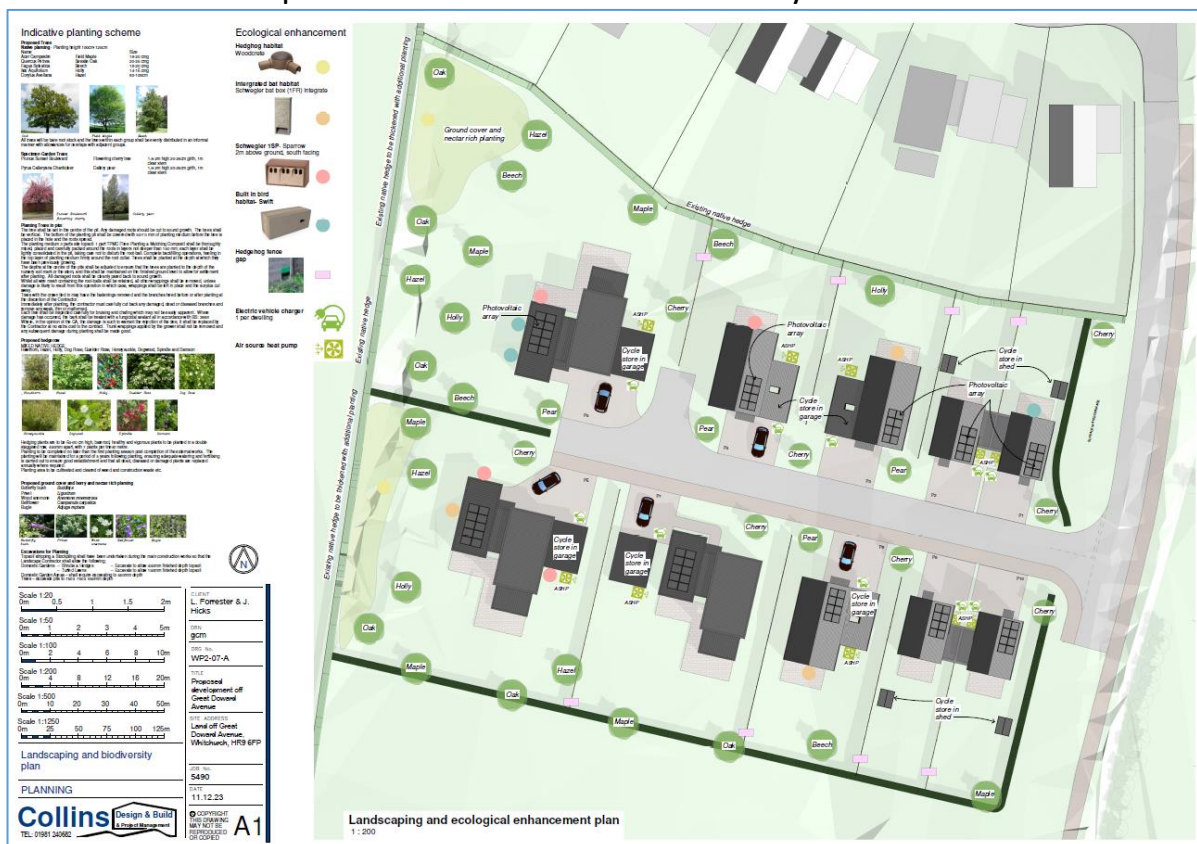
### **Layout**

- 4.2 Following the construction of the A40 in the late 1960's / early 1970's, Whitchurch has grown westwards. This has gradually pushed development up the rising land west of the A40 and away from the original core of the village including north and south of Llangrove Road. The development of Grange Park, Ridgeway Crescent, Yew Tree close and infill plots all occurring within this timeframe.
- 4.3 Symonds Yat View continued this historical growth of the village. Further development south of here is therefore a logical location for a modest expansion of the village and this is reflected in the NDP allocation.
- 4.4 The site has a residential context and Symonds Yat View development provides a clear but simple development framework and layout to follow. This being a new estate road running parallel with this development and Llangrove Road with properties either side addressing the road.
- 4.5 The proposal mirrors this layout and in doing, achieves a development that complements the existing pattern of development. This means every house can be orientated north/south allowing the benefits of passive solar gain to be maximised.
- 4.6 The layout also achieves adequate separation distance to existing dwellings (far in excess of the normal dwelling to dwelling design standard of 21 metres) to ensure there is no unacceptable impact on their amenity.



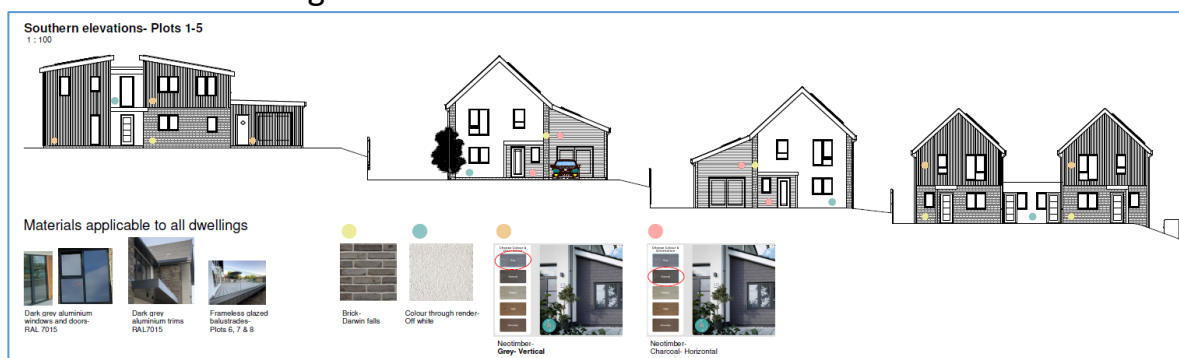
## Amount/Density and Landscaping

- 4.7 Proportionally, a development of ten dwellings amounts to a 3.8% increase in the number of households within the village. As such, the scale of development is modest both in its own right and when compared with the settlement.
- 4.8 The starting point for the number of dwellings and development area is the NDP allocation. However, this is a smaller land area than is occupied by Symonds Yat View and so the footprint of development has been reduced through having more smaller dwellings including 40% 2 beds. This ensures that the density in terms of plot sizes, garden sizes and dwelling spacing is compatible with Symonds Yat View and the landscape context. The density also reflects the challenging levels within the site and is ultimately considered to be in keeping with the character of the area and AONB.
- 4.9 The extent of housing has also been pulled back from the western end of the site as was recommended by the Council landscape officer for the neighbouring development. This avoids a hard edge to the development at the highest point and aids with integrating the development into the landscape setting. The benefits of this are bolstered with planting along the western edge as well as within the development and the southern boundary.



## Design, Appearance and Scale

- 4.10 Whitchurch is made up of a diverse mix of house styles, sizes and materials which offers some design flexibility. Symonds Yat View is the only locally distinctive vernacular and this development is a relatively successful design format having regard to the landscape designation and site topography. This therefore forms the template for this application.
- 4.11 The designs have simple rectangular forms with crisp articulation of the elevations in terms of the distribution of the materials and fenestration. The mass and proportions of the larger properties is broken up through having two principal components connected with lower flat roofed sections, which also creates depth to the elevations.
- 4.12 A mixture of pitched and mono pitch roofs is proposed. This aids in breaking up the roofscape and introduces additional interest within the street. This allows the dwellings and heights to flow with the topography in keeping with the reminder of the village.



- 4.13 The use of a mixture of render, brick and vertical composite timber cladding break up the elevations and soften the appearance of the dwellings.
- 4.14 Proposed powder coated aluminium windows without cills or lintels will create a simple detail. The use of slate and dark grey standing seam roof will create a complimentary but muted roofscape. The selected materials also aid in assimilating the development into the landscape setting.

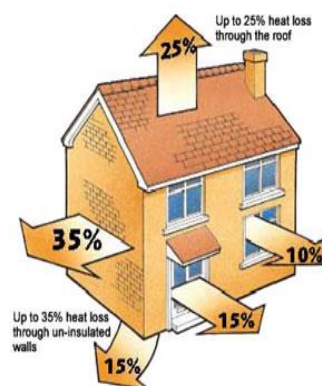
## Sustainable Construction, Energy and Water Efficiency

- 4.15 Changes to Building Regulations to increase the energy efficiency requirements for new homes came into force last year. The consultation also included proposals for a 'Future Homes Standard' which will require new build homes to



be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency; to be introduced by 2025. The proposal will embrace these changes.

4.16 More stringent targets for the U-values of walls, floors, roofs, windows and doors, along with thermal bridging and air tightness will be specified in order that the energy demands of new dwellings are minimised.



4.17 This entails adopting a 'fabric first' approach to the design and construction to achieve super insulated air tight house that minimise heat loss. To aid with achieving this, building forms should be relatively simple. The proposed design adopts these principles.

4.18 The layout has properties orientated south enabling the benefits of passive solar gain to be maximised. This will be complemented with solar PVs on all east or west roof slopes and houses will be heated with air source heat pumps. The houses and garages will also have electric vehicle charging points and space to accommodate cycle storage.

4.19 Materials will be sourced that are 'A+' rated in the BRE green materials guide whilst the timber used in construction will be sustainability sourced and Forest Stewardship Certified. All appliances will also be 'A++' rated and low energy lighting system will also be installed.

4.20 Water efficiency measures will also be employed including the use of dual flush toilets, flow restrictors on taps, smart leak detection system and installation of water butts directly connected to the rainwater system for the houses for irrigation of the gardens. This will enable a water efficiency standard set out in policy SD3 of 110 litres per person, per day to be achieved.

4.21 In summary, a high quality, sustainable development is proposed that has been informed by the characteristics of the site and the built and landscape setting, will aid in minimising the carbon impact of the development and meet the requirements of CS polices SD1, SD3, NDP policies WG7, 8 and 14 and Section 12 of the NPPF.

## 5. Access and Parking

- 5.1 The proposal utilises the existing estate access named Great Doward Avenue. This initially serves Yew Tree Close and Symonds Yat View, which has been constructed to adoptable standards. The access falls within the 30mph speed limit and has splays in both directions that exceed that required by the speed limit.
- 5.2 Great Doward Avenue is to be extended into the site then teeing off via a give way junction to the development. The estate road includes a refuge vehicle turning head and pavement on one side. The site is already served by a two metre footpath, which continues on to Grange Park providing a safe pedestrian route to village facilities.



- 5.3 The access road has been designed to meet the requirements of the Council's highway design guide in terms of width, geometry and gradients. Similarly, the driveways work with the contours and therefore provide a relatively level vehicle and pedestrian access from the estate road to each property compliant with Part M of Building Regulations entitled 'Access to and use of buildings'.
- 5.4 Parking for at least two vehicles is available within the curtilage of each property and larger houses also have an oversized garage for parking and storage of bicycles, refuse and recycling wheelie bins etc.

5.5 A safe access and links with the village along with appropriate parking and maneuvering space can be achieved in accordance with CS policy MT1 and NDP policies WG1 and WG20.

## 6. Landscape

### Landscape Planning Policy

#### 6.1 Herefordshire Core Strategy

SS6 Environmental quality and local distinctiveness

- Requires developments to conserve, enhance and be informed by the landscape, biodiversity, heritage and other environmental assets that contribute to the County's distinctiveness.

LD1 Landscape and townscape

- All development should demonstrate that the character of the landscape has positively influenced the design and scale,
- Protect and enhance the setting of the settlement,
- Conserve and enhance the natural, historic and scenic beauty of important landscapes including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Incorporate new landscape schemes to ensure development integrates into its surroundings
- Maintain and extend tree cover.

Policy LD3 Green infrastructure

- This policy seeks that developments protect, manage and plan for the preservation of existing and delivery of new green infrastructure.

Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026

#### 6.2 Policy WV D2 of the management plan in respect of new development encourages and supports:

*'..... high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage, landscaping and Green Infrastructure in all developments, including Permitted Development, to ensure greater sustainability and decarbonisation, and that they complement, conserve and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness including scale and setting and benefit or enhance the natural environment'.*

#### 6.3 Policy WV D3 states:

*Resist inappropriate development which will create a persistent and dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the AONB and/or if it damages Special Qualities in the AONB, including through high levels of Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 91 noise and/or light*

*pollution or any SAC, SPA or Ramsar site or other sites designated as environmentally important.*

6.4 NDP policy WG14 titled 'Conserving the landscape and scenic beauty' require that within the AONB,  
*'Development proposals which are acceptable in principle should contribute positively to the Parish's rural character, ensuring the features contributing to its character type, are conserved, restored or enhanced through measures consistent with their characterisation. Landscape features such as trees, vistas and panoramic views that are assessed as important should also be protected. To achieve this, landscape proposals should form an integral part of the design for the development, retaining as many natural features within or surrounding the site as possible'.*

6.5 National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

Paragraph 8 explains that achieving sustainable development requires the social, economic and environmental gains to be sought simultaneously.

Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- Paragraph 180 – The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes

- b) Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside

- c) Minimising impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible....

- Paragraph 181 explains the level of protection afforded to landscapes and biodiversity features should be commensurate with their hierarchical status and designation – international, national, local.

- Paragraphs 182 and 183 states that great weight should be afforded to conserving and enhancing the scenic and landscape beauty of the AONB and major developments within the AONB should only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

6.6 In terms of NPPF paragraph 183, the number of dwellings and density of development is low and consequently, the scale of the development is not major in relation to the site context and in proportion with the village and parish more generally. The exceptional circumstances test in paragraph 183 of the NPPF do not therefore apply.

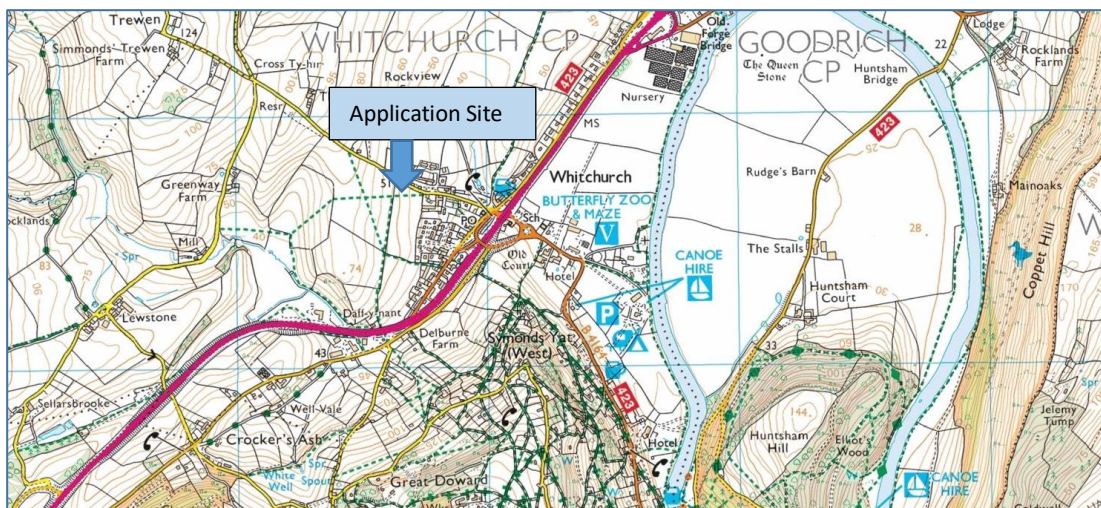
6.7 Moreover, paragraph 6.25 of the NDP explains that this matter formed part of the consideration in allocating the site for ten dwellings in the NDP.

*The allocated site forms part of a larger field, some of which already has planning permission for a further 9 dwellings. Should the whole field be developed it is considered this would amount to major development within the Wye Valley AONB. However, development of a smaller parcel in a sensitive manner with structural landscaping to mitigate effects on distant views from the south-west should be acceptable.*

### Landscape Description of the Site and Surroundings

6.8 The majority of the site itself comprises of improved grassland, which was entirely re-seeded last year and has previously either been grazed or cut for crops. The site is devoid of any notable landscape features. Along the western boundary area small number of ornamental trees and a gappy hedge.

6.9 The wider surrounding landscape to the west and south comprises of relatively large field pattern enclosed by native hedges and occasional trees. To the east of the A40 is lower lying and relatively flat floodplain leading up to the River Wye. This is made up of a mixture of low agricultural floodplain, tree lined river edge and dramatic gorges with steep wooded slopes.



6.10 Approximately 2.0km east of the site the land rises towards the partly wooded hill known as Coppet Hill which reaches an elevation of 200m AOD whilst 1.5KM south east is the wooded Huntsham Hill. Some 600 metres



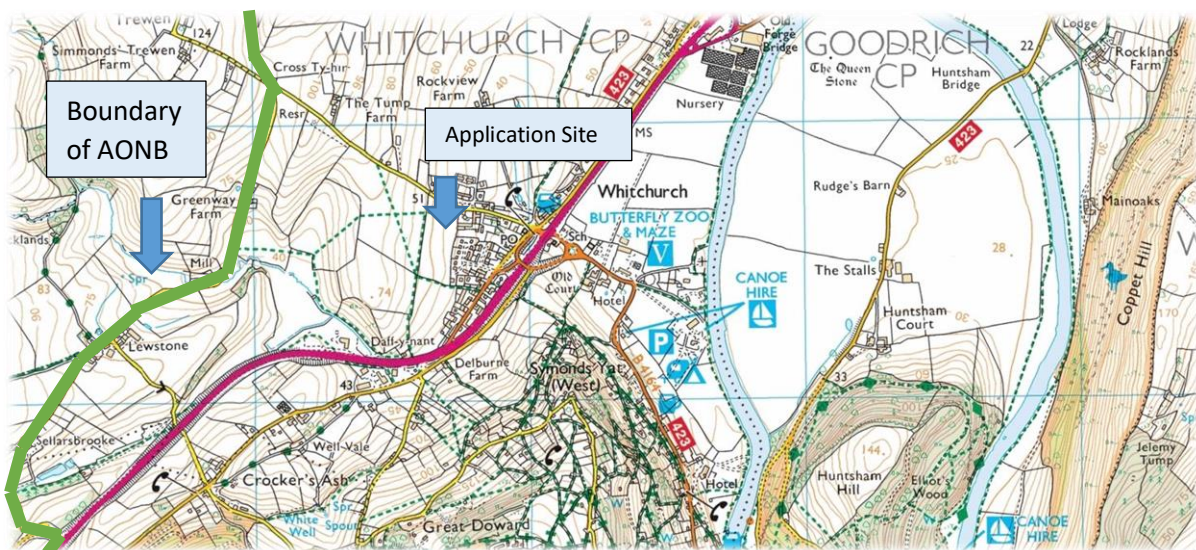
south east is Symonds Yat West and Great Doward Hill. These are crossed by a maze of single width lanes and public footpaths providing access to over 100 predominantly detached properties dotted on the banks of the hill.

6.11 Aside from these natural features, the other dominating feature of the landscape is the A40.

### Landscape Designation and Character

6.12 The character of the site and wider landscape has been evaluated in several documents and studies including the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026), The National Character Areas as defined by Natural England and the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment.

6.13 The site and surroundings fall within the Wye Valley National Landscape, which has the highest status of landscape protection. The western boundary of which is 650 metres west of the site as illustrated on the map below.



6.14 The site sits within 'Principal Settled Farmlands landscape type as identified in the Council's Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). Whilst this document no longer has any policy weight, it is a useful landscape characterisation tool to determine landscape impact alongside AONB considerations.

- 6.15 This being a rolling agricultural landscape with scattered farms and villages, a network of small winding lanes and a matrix of hedged fields. Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees, groups of trees around dwellings and trees along stream sides and other watercourses. This landscape type is described as having a 'notably domestic character' in terms of the scale of the field pattern and nature and density of settlements.
- 6.16 Protection of the smaller field pattern and associated hedgerows is encouraged as is new tree planting on the edge of settlements, but not larger woodland planting.

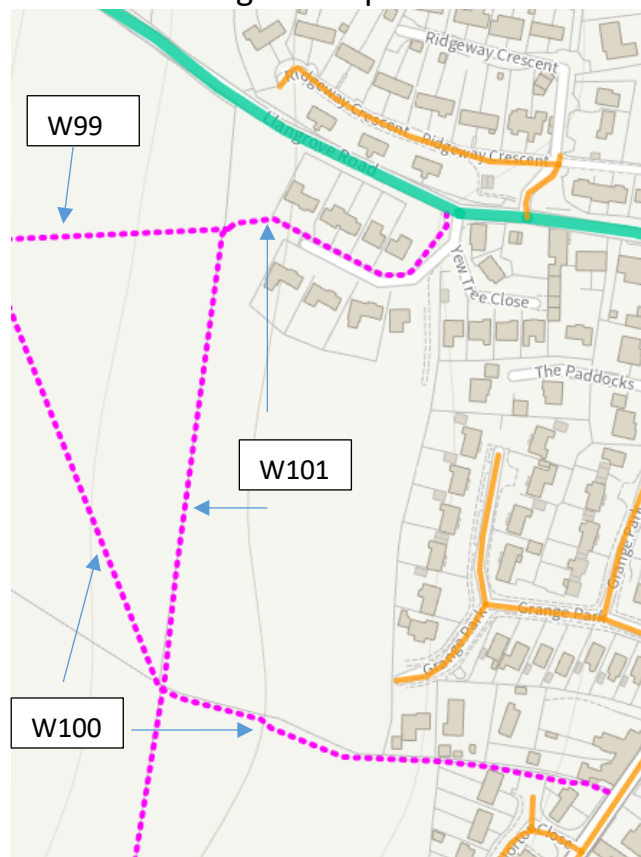
### **Landscape Character Assessment**

- 6.17 The surroundings display some of the characteristics of the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape type such as relatively regular field pattern defined by hedgerows, occasional hedgerow trees and no woodland. However, the site forms part of a larger field, which is not a typical scale of the field pattern for this landscape type. Some of the hedgerows are in poor condition and any hedge that may have existed along the western boundary has now largely disappeared.
- 6.18 The landscape context to the site is also important. The site has a relationship with both the prevailing landscape character type of the rolling agricultural fields to the south and west and the existing neighbouring housing estates.
- 6.19 As the site forms part of a larger field with no notable landscape features, it is considered that the site itself, in landscape character terms has capacity to accommodate a modest housing development without compromising the wider landscape character. Indeed, the HLCA recommends in terms of new development in villages, that this is low density and '*be modest in size in order to preserve the character of the original settlement*'. The proposed development meets this requirement.
- 6.20 The proposed landscaping will also restore and enhance the typical HCLA landscape character features for this character type in terms of new hedgerow and tree planting.



## Visual Impact Assessment

6.21 Public Right of Way ref Whitchurch 101 runs up through Symonds Yat View and along the western site boundary connecting with footpath ref Whitchurch 100 returning south into the village. The plan below identifies these footpaths.



Above: Local public footpath and bridleways

6.22 Symonds Yat view properties largely conceal views of the site walking up through the estate. More open views of the site exist travelling along the western site boundary on footpath 101 (photo 1 on the following page) although these are all in the context of Symonds Yat View, mature trees along Llangrove Road and Ridgeway Crescent beyond. South of the site, a mature hedge prevents any views of the site along footpath 100. Further west, the topography also limits views of the site from footpaths 99 and 100. For example, the western site boundary is around 1 metre below the adjoining field to the west.

6.23 Long range views of the site are available from some of the elevated footpaths and lanes at Little Doward to the south and Symonds Yat to the south west. The existing village largely form the foreground to these views whilst Symonds Yat View and mature trees along Llangrove Road including the coppice by Tump



Farm form the backdrop. The site is also relatively well contained from these longer range vantage points.



Above – Photo 1 looking NE towards the site from footpath W101 along the western site boundary

Below - Photo 2 looking NW towards the site from newly constructed footpath running south from the site



- 6.24 This analysis of the local and medium range visibility of the site from public vantage points has been used to guide the design process. In particular, it became clear that the arrangement, scale and height of new buildings similar to Symonds Yat View would integrate with the landscape and built context and in doing, avoid any unacceptable adverse visual effects in views from these footpaths. The proposed variation in building height, scale and roof form ensures the mass of development is broken up and therefore, is not dominating from these vantage points. The cascading roof lines also ensure the development does not break the skyline.
- 6.25 Additionally, views of the buildings will be in the context of the existing built development and are further filtered by intervening green infrastructure and/or topography, particularly within longer range views.
- 6.26 Visual analysis from long range views also highlighted the importance of the transition between the western edge of the development and the rolling agricultural landscape beyond to the west, which is also within the AONB. Development up to the western field boundary would create a harsher transition between the development edge and countryside, which is not in keeping with the manner in which the western end of Symonds Yat View and Ridgeway Crescent filter out.
- 6.27 Additional tree planting to the west is proposed to build on this existing green infrastructure along Llangrove Road and east of Tump Farm, extending the tree cover on the edge of the village. This is also in keeping with and reinforces the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape character. This is complemented by further tree and hedge planting on the southern site boundary and new hedge/thickening of the existing hedge along the western site boundary.
- 6.28 Having regard to the layout, density and design approach, the impact on the recreational value of local footpaths will be minimal.



6.29 The visual impact is further tempered with the careful selection and arrangement of materials. The use of timber, dark brick and matt dark colour roof material will respect the landscape setting.

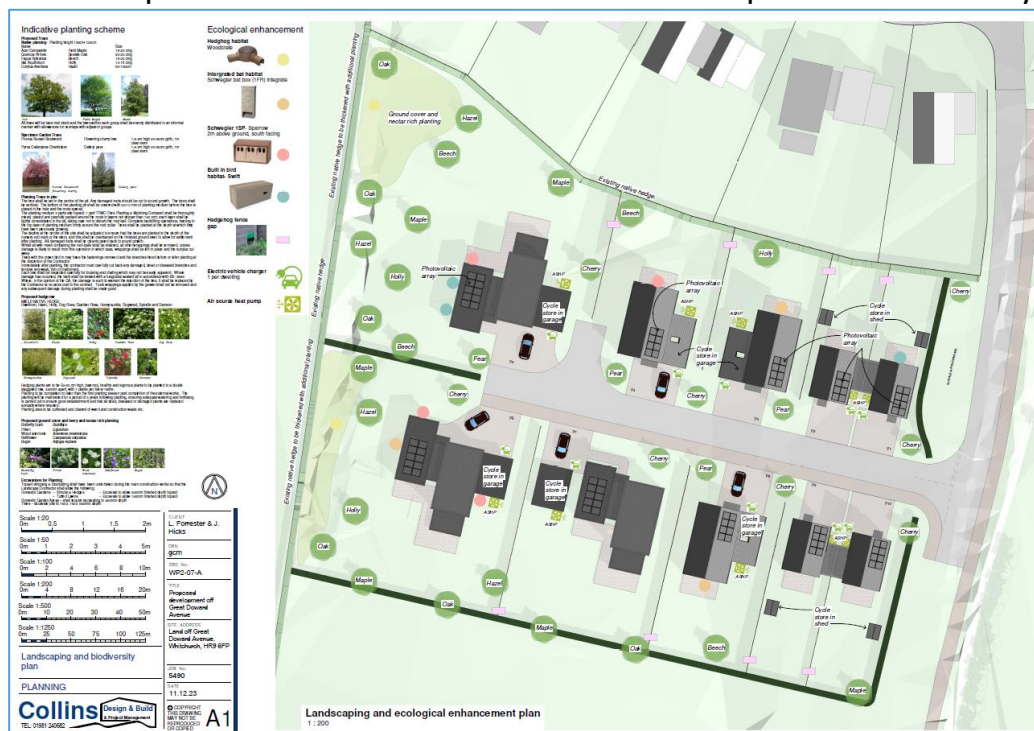
6.30 The design and appearance of the proposal confirm that a development can be achieved that is compatible with the built and landscape context of the site. Furthermore, the public amenity of the local footpaths will not be harmed and the overall visual effects of the development will not be adverse.

### Landscaping

6.31 The application is accompanied by a landscape masterplan, which sets out the proposed planting strategy. This has been informed by the analysis of both the landscape character and visual impact of the development. The key components are:

- A new hedgerow along the western site boundary
- Native tree planting within the western buffer to complement and build upon the existing green infrastructure to the north
- Tree planting within the frontages to green up the street
- A combination of native hedgerow and tree planting along the southern boundary to create a new green edge to the development.
- Ground cover planting to enhance biodiversity

6.32 A list of species is included that will have landscape and biodiversity value.



### **Landscape Summary**

- 6.33 The site and wider landscape displays some of the characteristics of the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape type although the scale of the field pattern in particular is not typical. The character of the site itself is also somewhat degraded in that historic hedgerows have been removed.
- 6.34 The character of the site will clearly change as a result of the development but with the scale and design of the proposal development, the landscape has capacity to absorb the impact of the development without compromising the overall landscape character.
- 6.35 The site is visible to varying degrees from many of the public footpaths in the area. However, most of these viewpoints are between 500 and 700 metres away and from these distances, the site is viewed within a wider panoramic and context of neighbouring housing developments and the village. The development area relates logically to existing development from these vantage points.
- 6.36 The high quality sustainable design, muted palette of materials and proposed landscaping further aid in integrating the development into the landscape setting.
- 6.37 In combination, these measures are successful in mitigating any slight impact on the character and appearance of the AONB such that the requirements of CS policy LD1 and LD4, NDP policy WG14 and Section 15 of the NPPF along with Management Plan Policies WV-D2 and D3 have been met.

## **7. Other Technical Matters**

### **Biodiversity**

- 7.1 The application is supported by an ecology survey which examines the existing habitats and species within and adjoining the site and how the proposal impacts on the ecological value of the site.
- 7.2 The application site is improved grassland of low ecological value. The ecology survey confirms that the site has little ecological interest.
- 7.3 The development offers the opportunity to both safeguard and significantly enhance the ecological value of the site through the new native hedgerow and tree planting and installation of bat, bird and hedgehog boxes achieving a net gain in biodiversity.
- 7.4 The ecology survey also confirms that there are also no other ecological habitats or species nearby that will be impacted upon by the development.
- 7.5 The development meets the requirements of CS policy LD2 and NDP policy WG15.

### **Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 7.6 A review of the Environment Agency records confirms that the site is not at risk of flooding from any source.
- 7.7 Surface water drainage is to be managed sustainably through the use of soakaways and soakaway tests verify that ground conditions will support infiltration drainage.
- 7.8 The drainage strategy drawing on the following page identifies roof runoff being managed within each plot, permeable driveway and road drainage discharging to soakaway crates at the lower part of the site. This is the same surface water drainage strategy as was installed for Symonds Yat View. There will be no surface water discharges to the public sewer network. A temporary swale was constructed across the site last year to capture surface field runoff immediately



## 8. Summary – A Sustainable Development

- 8.1 The relevant policy test for consideration of this application is set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF, which requires:
- housing applications to be considered the context of a presumption in favour of sustainable development and;
  - c) approving developments that accord with an up to date development plan without delay; or
  - d) where the policies that are most important for determining the application are out of date granting planning permission unless:
    - i) Specific policies in the Framework that protect area or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development; or
    - ii) Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.
- 8.2 Although the Core Strategy is now out of date in policy terms as it is more than five years since adoption, the council can presently demonstrate the required five year supply of housing land. Consequently, the policies relevant to the consideration of this application can still be given significant weight. Similarly, full weight can be given to the adopted NDP.
- 8.3 Whitchurch is the second largest settlement in the Ross on Wye Housing Market Area and benefits from an excellent range of services, amenities and transport links. This is reflected in the fact the adopted Core Strategy identifies Whitchurch as a sustainable village to accommodate new housing and the site is within the settlement boundary for the adopted NDP and a specific housing allocation for ten dwellings.
- 8.4 The design has been informed by and respects the built and landscape context of the site and this report demonstrates that all other technical requirements of topic specific development plan policies concerning matters such as carbon reduction, access, landscape, drainage, and biodiversity have been satisfactorily addressed.
- 8.5 The development also accords with the key criteria based policies of the adopted NDP and AONB Management Plan. The development impact on the AONB does not therefore provide a clear reason for refusal of the development as set out in Para 11 d of the NPPF.



8.6 In summary, the development is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, compliant with the development plan and there are no technical reasons why permission should be withheld and therefore in accordance with paragraph 11(c) of the NPPF, the application should be approved.